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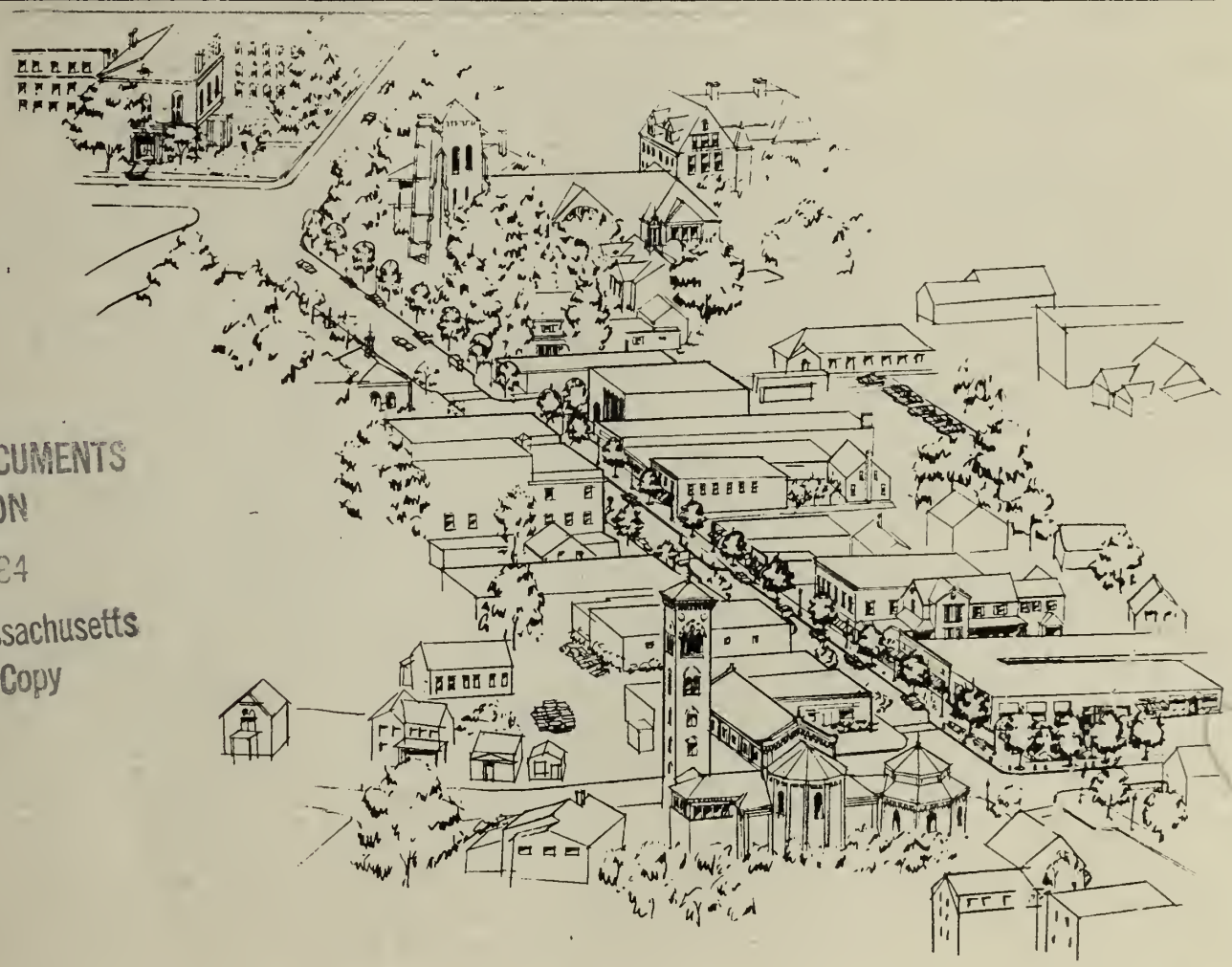
Prepared for the Town of Northbridge, Massachusetts

Whitinsville Revitalization Program

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
334 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

April 29, 1981



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Whitinsville Revitalization Program

Prepared for the Town of Northbridge, MA.

by
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
334 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116

The authors gratefully acknowledge the participation of the Community Opportunities Group, Inc. in this study.

April 29, 1981

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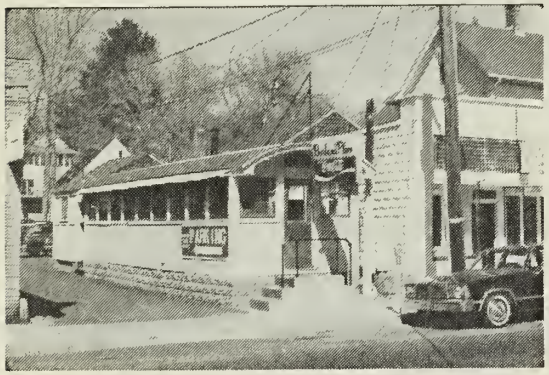
I Introduction

Whitinsville is an older mill community within the Town of Northbridge, Massachusetts.

This document presents information for use by the Northbridge Office of Community Planning and Development, local officials and other persons and organizations interested in the revitalization of downtown Whitinsville. The document provides a revitalization program for the area based on industrial redevelopment in the ATF Davidson Mill complex, regional and local traffic improvements, urban design improvements, and public funding and technical assistance opportunities.

By increasing regional accessibility and by taking advantage of the potential for hydroelectric power at the Mill complex, this revitalization strategy aims to increase the marketability of vacant Mill space, resulting in the lease or purchase of this space and, ultimately, in more intensive industrial utilization of the Mill complex. If this is achieved, the commercial viability of stores in the nearby downtown area will be greatly enhanced.

Equally important to the success of the Church Street commerical area is the implementation of a variety of urban design improvements which draw upon or reinforce the urban industrial heritage of the Town. Also, the addition of pedestrian amenities, and better management and use of existing parking facilities are important in reorienting the downtown from a conduit for through-traffic to a pedestrian-oriented shopping area.



Small commercial establishments share Church Street with a variety of residential structures.

Whitinsville Today

The central business district of Whitinsville--a mill community located within the Town of Northbridge, Massachusetts--comprises a commercial area of approximately 89 units (Town of Northbridge. Community Development Block Grant Preapplication. October 1980.). Originally a residential section, Church Street developed as a commercial district during the 1920's and 1930's. The street is diverse both in terms of its variety of architectural styles and in terms of its range of existing building conditions.

The nearby ATF Davidson mill complex is located on the Mumford River, several blocks from the central business district. The complex is composed of a variety of brick structures, several of which are occupied by the ATF Davidson Company, a producer of graphic arts equipment. Also located at the mill is a hydro-electric generating unit which provided power for the complex until 1960, when its use was discontinued.

Linking the mill complex and the central business district is a town center which includes a Town Hall, a Town Library, a church and the Cottonmill Housing. Although this section is attractive and well designed, only limited pedestrian activity occurs here, perhaps due to its location at the periphery of the commercial area.

Mill Complex

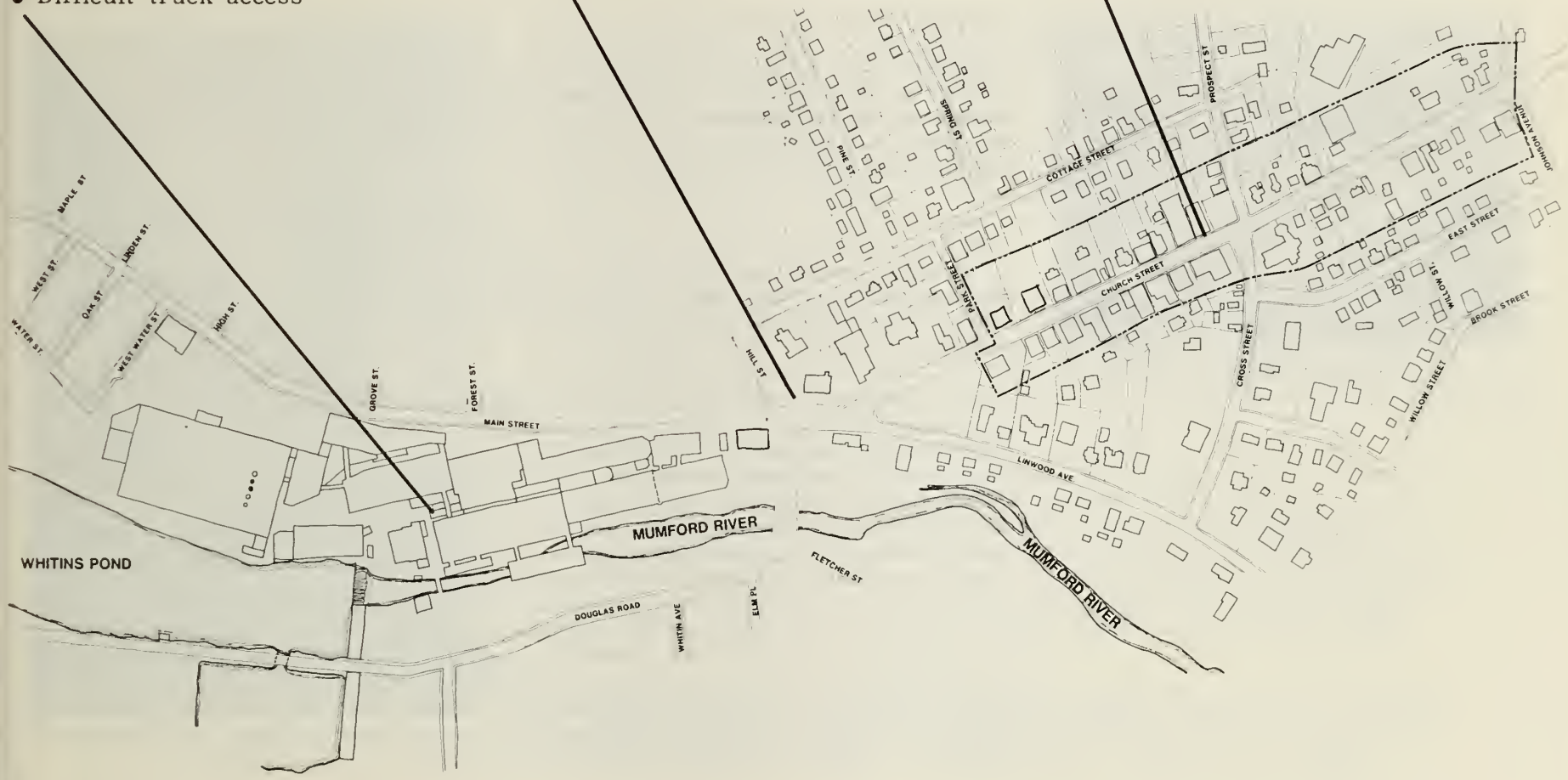
- Consolidation has resulted in vacant space
- Opportunity for industrial revitalization
- Potential lease/purchase by industrial and/or R&D uses
- In-place hydro power equipment
- Difficult truck access

Whitinsville Center

- Town center image - town hall, library, church, school
- Cotton mill housing
- Well designed attractive image
- Main link between Church St. and mill complex

Church St. Commercial Area

- Vacant and deteriorated stores
- Poor image
- Lack of cohesion as shopping area
- Good parking supply
- Potential streetscape and facade improvements



II Agenda for Industrial Revitalization

The ATF Davidson mill complex is located on the Mumford River, several blocks from the central business district.

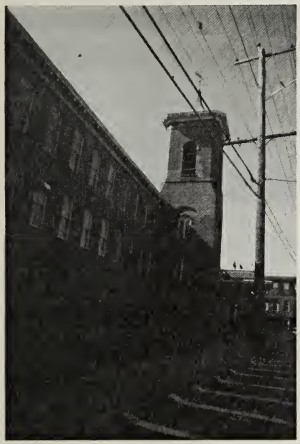
Background

The history, development and character of Whitinsville is intimately linked to the presence of hydropower and the employment associated with the Whitin Textile Mills. To a large degree, the economic vitality of the Whitinsville commercial area--and of the Town as a whole--still hinges on the industrial activities which occur in the Mill complex.

The Mill's present owner, ATF Davidson (a Division of White Consolidated Industries), is by far the largest employer in Whitinsville, with a work force of approximately 900 people. However, U.S. Census data for Whitinsville indicates there is a locally underutilized labor base, a resource which could be readily tapped if industrial expansion or development were to occur in the Mills.

Another underutilized resource is the Mumford River, which provided hydroelectric power for the Mills until 1960. The still-present hydroelectric generating unit, if rebuilt and made operational, could provide a valuable alternative energy source for Mill owners and tenants. A hydroelectric capability could also prove to be an effective tool for creating interest in the Mill complex as a prospective location for other firms, especially new companies seeking to reduce the large operating costs represented by energy-related expenses.

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest the actions--and their timing and responsible parties--for strengthening the Town's industrial base. The industrial revitalization strategy will focus on the Mill complex and upon its owner, the ATF Davidson Company. Such a strategy will require cooperative action between industry, government, businesspeople and local citizens. This coordinated activity is appropriate given the Town's



The ATF Davidson Company mill complex.

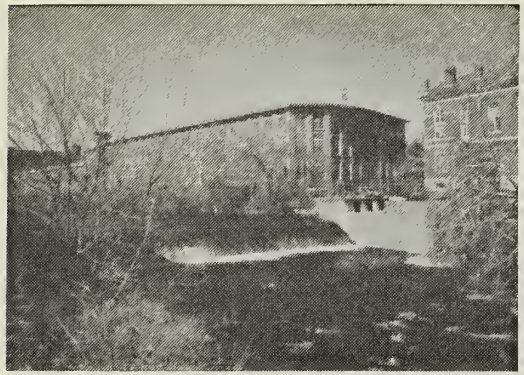
historic development and its need to increase employment and the local property tax base, and to revitalize the Whitinsville commercial area. The preparation of this agenda is meant as a starting point for future discussion and action, ultimately leading to significant industrial growth and development in Whitinsville. The accompanying chart, Industrial Revitalization Program Tasks, details this agenda for industrial revitalization, describing industrial tasks, responsible parties, related agencies, timing and other relevant information.

Summary of Strategy

The economic aims and potential benefits of reindustrialization in Whitinsville include improved local employment, increased area real estate values, a strengthened local property tax base, economic stability for existing downtown businesses, reduced vacancy in downtown commercial space, and increased economic vitality for the ATF Davidson Company.

Lease or purchase of vacant mill space represents the most critical component of the reindustrialization strategy for Whitinsville. This goal will require a careful marketing program involving an inventory of the characteristics of existing buildings, planning and cost estimates for space reuse, selection of a leasing or marketing agent, physical renovation/adaptation of facilities for reuse, and development of a promotional program for the available mill space. Potential tenants include light manufacturing companies, research and development firms, and the high technology industries.

Improved regional and local transportation access, especially for trucks, is a highly desirable element of a program for improving the industrial potential of the Mill complex. As discussed in Chapter III, Trans-

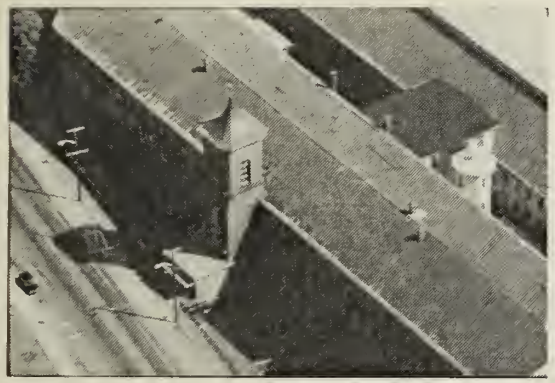


A hydro-electric generating unit--unused since 1960--is located at the mill complex.

portation Analysis, signage directing drivers to Whitinsville from major regional connectors should be improved. Because of problems concerning noise levels, turning radii, signals, bridge conditions, lines of sight, speed limits or other limiting factors, special truck routes may have to be identified, marked, and mapped for distribution to industries utilizing large trucks. If possible, heavy truck traffic should avoid quiet residential areas due to noise and safety factors. Roadway improvements desirable for facilitating truck transportation should be identified and requested of the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. Although major improvements are unlikely in the near future (an I-90 interchange at Route 146 would be beneficial to Whitinsville), improvements such as bridge repair and roadway widening currently underway in the area should be supported.

Reactivation of hydroelectric generation at the Mill complex is desirable to reduce ATF Davidson energy costs, to attract firms as prospective tenants of the complex, and as a matter of regional historic interest and pride. Accomplishing this goal will require inspecting and testing equipment such as generators, dams and gates. Alternative reactivation scenarios will have to be developed, based on differing levels of investment and technology. Permit requirements and funding options must be investigated (see Chapter V, Sources of Funding and Technical Assistance), and preferred reactivation scenarios must be selected and implemented. Once the hydroelectric generation capability at the Mill is on line, the value of leasable space will immediately increase (and will continue to do so as the price of conventional fuels continues to rise).

The need to augment natural gas supplies is also important in enabling industrial growth to occur in Whitinsville. Existing local domestic, commercial and industrial demands exceed the full pipeline capacity; Mill



Aerial view of ATF Davidson mill complex.

complex consumption of natural gas would alone consume nearly all local supplies (were it not that other fuels are currently used). The ability to assure prospective tenants of the availability of natural gas would provide yet another valuable tool in convincing firms to lease or purchase Mill property. Augmenting natural gas supplies would require an examination of local supply and demand, an assessment of costs and benefits of increasing supplies to the Town, and design and construction of facilities necessary to augment local natural gas supplies.

An industrial development committee should be formed to ensure coordination and cooperation between Town officials in Whitinsville. Such a committee should include representatives of Town Selectmen, the Office of Planning and Community Development, the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, ATF Davidson and other local companies. An effective Industrial Development Committee for Whitinsville could be extremely useful in coordinating industrial development activities and in serving as a spokesman to other agencies such as the Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), the Mass. Department of Public Works, or the Mass. Executive Office of Communities and Development, each of which may be useful in providing or helping to locate sources of support for the reindustrialization of Whitinsville. A variety of such sources are listed and described in Chapter V, Sources of Funding and Technical Assistance.

Industrial Revitalization Program Tasks

ACTION	SPECIFIC TASKS	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	COORDINATE WITH...	TIMING	COMMENT
A. Lease Vacant Mill Space	1. Inventory existing buildings: physical condition, location, truck access, parking, availability for leasehold, separately from ATFD operations. Conduct market and feasibility study.	ATF Davidson as supported by architectural/economic/real estate analysts	Northbridge OCPD	1981	Contact Governor's Development Office for contacts with other mill complex owners/managers
	2. Prepare phasing, schematic design plan and cost estimates for space reuse.	"	"	1981	
	3. Initiate transportation, energy improvements	Town	"	1981	See Actions B, C, D (below)
	4. Contract, interview, select leasing agent(s).	ATF Davidson	"	1981	
	5. Design and conduct regionwide promotional program for available mill buildings in Whitinsville.	Town and ATF Davidson	State (Make It In Mass!), Business organizations such as the Mass. High Tech Council	1982	Combine/coordinate with promotion of commercial area
	6. Prepare final designs, obtain construction bids, commence construction.	"	"	1982-83	
	7. Complete construction; Mill buildings occupied.	ATF Davidson/new industries		1983-84	
B. Improve Transportation Access	1. Identify truck routes to major highways.	Town/Consultants	CMRPC, major town industrial concerns, and residents (perhaps via public meeting)	1981	Investigate potential interchange at I-90 and Rte. 146
	2. Prepare map of preferred routes, print and make available.	"	"	1981	
	3. Develop and implement signage program to direct drivers to Whitinsville.	"	Mass. DPW	1981-82	
	4. Examine truck routes for problems with turning radii signals, bridges, lines of sight, speed limits, etc.	"	Industrial concerns, those living along potential truck routes.	1981	
	5. Initiate project proposal mechanisms to Mass. DPW and Town of Northbridge for roadway improvements.	"	CMRPC, Mass. DPW	1982	
	6. Design and construct improvements	Mass. DPW	Town, CMRPC	1983	

ACTION	SPECIFIC TASKS	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	COORDINATE WITH...	TIMING	COMMENT
C. Reactivate hydroelectric generation facilities	1. Inspect and test generating equipment.	ATF Davidson/consulting engineer	U.S. Department of Energy, Army Corps of Engineers, Mass. Department of Environmental Affairs, Mass. Energy Resources Office	1981	
	2. Inspect and test impoundment dams and gates for watershed hydro system	ATF Davidson/consultant/Town	"	1981	
	3. Obtain cost estimates and electricity generation rates for alternative hydro reactivation scenarios (ranging from minor equipment repair and limited use of water to major system reactivation)	"	"		
	4. Review and identify permit requirements for each alternative scenario	"	"		
	5. Review/evaluate funding options and economic strategy for investment in hydro	"	"	1981	See Sources of Funding and Technical Assistance chapter
	6. Select preferred alternative	"	"	1981	
	7. Prepare initial designs for improvements			1981	
	8. Initiate funding support application process	"	"	1981	
	9. Initiate permit application process.	ATF Davidson/consulting engineer	"	1981	
	10. Design and construct improvements	"	"	1982-83	
D. Augment natural gas supplies to town	1. Examine and evaluate local needs for natural gas as compared with allocations and delivered supplies.	Town/utility	Mass. Department of Public Utilities, ATF-Davidson	1981	
	2. Review plans for supply augmentation.	"	"	1981	
	3. Assess costs and benefits of increasing supplies to town.	Town/consultant/utility	"	1981	
	4. Prepare preliminary designs, obtain permits.	utility	"	1981	
	5. Design and construct improvements.	utility	"	1982-84	

III Transportation Analysis

Church Street looking west, at Cross Street.

Introduction

Whitinsville's transportation access has been assessed in terms of three issues derived from analyses at different geographic scales. Regional vehicular access, especially to the east and to the west, is a critical concern which relates to all aspects of Whitinsville's economy, but most directly to industrial development in Whitinsville. For downtown merchants and business-people along Church Street, local circulation is a topic of special importance, focusing on issues of convenience, safety and capacity for peak traffic flows. Of equal importance to downtown business-people is parking within the Whitinsville commercial area, a problem which--given the large volume of parking space available in the downtown--can be readily addressed.

Transportation in Whitinsville focuses chiefly on cars and trucks. Rail service, which is available to certain other sections of Northbridge, does not reach Whitinsville. The currently inactive Whitinsville spur once ran up Linwood Avenue to the mill complex. Reactivation of the spur is unlikely due to the cost, the probable need to realign the roadway for safety purposes, and floodplain limitations.

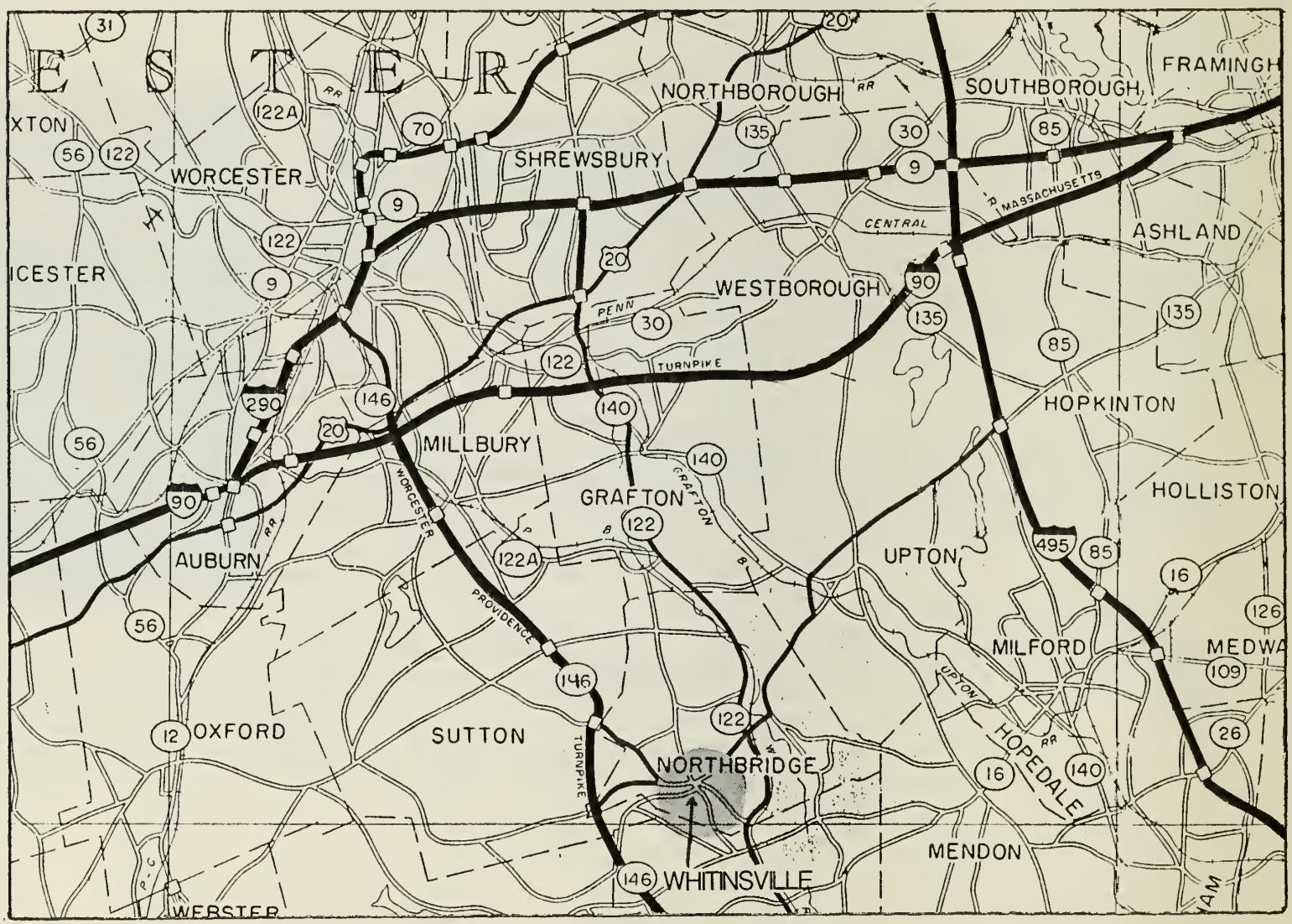
The following analyses and recommendations are based on field observations, sample traffic counts, a parking inventory, and previously collected data. Funding sources available to implement recommendations are included in Chapter V, Sources of Funding and Technical Assistance.

Regional Access

In recent years, the Town of Northbridge has become concerned that the lack of a convenient and direct vehicular access route to the east-west interstate system, I-90, and/or to the I-495 beltway which circles the Boston metropolitan area, represents a major impediment to the Town's industrial and commercial development. Although Northbridge faces problems concerning linkage to regional connectors, the Town's location does provide access to major arterials which--if used to best advantage--can provide sufficient regional access to service industrial development in the near future (see map).

Major structural solutions to the Town's regional access problems, such as an I-90 interchange at Route 146, are currently being studied by the Massachusetts Department of Public Works, but are unlikely to occur in the near future. The only improvement of this nature which is currently programmed by the Department of Public Works is widening of Route 146 to four lanes at sections between Northbridge and Sutton. Northbridge, in conjunction with other area towns which would benefit from improvements such as an I-90 interchange at Route 146, should continue to encourage the CMRPC and the Department of Public Works to consider such improvements.

Currently, the best vehicular route from Whitinsville to I-495 is via Route 122 to Route 135. If travelling east this may also represent the best route to I-90, by following I-495 north. If traveling west, a somewhat circuitous route must be taken via Route 122 to the East Millbury I-90 exchange. If travelling north to Worcester and areas beyond, Route 146 represents the best linkage to I-290.


E S T E R
XTON
ICESTER
WORCESTER
SHREWSBURY
NORTHBOROUGH
SOUTHBOROUGH
FRAMINGH
WESTBOROUGH
ASHLAND
HOPKINTON
HOLLISTON
MILLBURY
GRAFTON
AUBURN
UPTON
MILFORD
MEDWA
OXFORD
SUTTON
NORTHBRIDGE
WHITINSVILLE
MENDON
HOPEDALE
WEBSTER
PENN
TURNPIKE
CENTRAL
MASSACHUSETTS
PROVIDENCE
WORCESTER
GRAFTON
UPTON
RR

Other more beneficial routing options may be available for regional traffic to and from Whitinsville (depending on factors such as congestion, road conditions and services available along alternative routes). Town officials in cooperation with representatives of the Massachusetts DPW, the Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission, and the Whitinsville commercial and industrial communities should make a determination of optimal routes to regional connectors so that vehicular traffic to and from Whitinsville can be guided along these roadways.

This type of directional guidance could take a variety of forms. Signs along major routes between Whitinsville and regional connectors (especially I-90 and I-495) should clearly indicate the direction, necessary turns, and distances both to Whitinsville from the regional connectors, and to these connectors from Whitinsville.

Another form of directional guidance which could be provided by the Town or by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission is a regional access map--centered on Whitinsville--to be used or distributed by the Chamber of Commerce, firms such as ATF Davidson, commercial establishments or other interested parties.

Similarly, a table of distances by state highway from Whitinsville to various regional centers could be developed by the Town or other interested groups. This would help focus interest on Whitinsville's relative proximity to major highways and urban centers, rather than upon difficulties concerning regional access. Such a table and the aforementioned maps will be useful to commercial or industrial firms investigating Whitinsville as a prospective location.

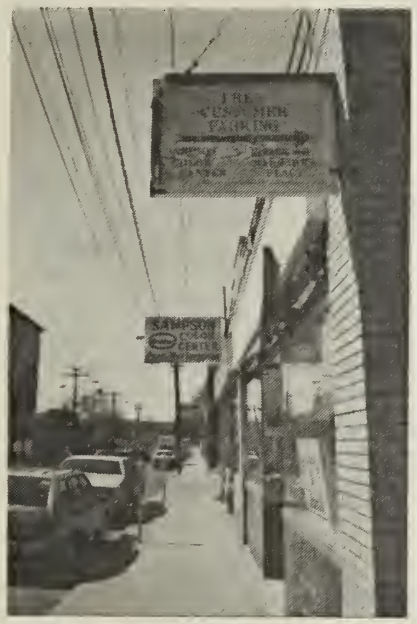
Church Street looking east, at Park Street. Bank construction site is at left.

While solutions such as these will not eliminate the problem of regional access for Whitinsville, these measures represent low-cost, easy-to-implement improvements over existing conditions. If actions such as these are taken, firms investigating Whitinsville as a potential location will see that the Town is working toward improving its regional accessibility. Also measures such as these will help the Town continue to keep the Mass. DPW, the CMRPC, and other relevant agencies aware of its interest and need to provide its residential, commercial and industrial population with better access to regional connectors.

Local Circulation

As has been documented in previous reports (see Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. Northbridge I-90 Access Alternatives Analysis. December 1979.), Church Street carries a relatively low volume of traffic (compared to its capacity), yet has experienced a high accident rate. According to the CMRPC, average vehicles per work-day is 1500 for Church Street (informal sample counts by SOM confirmed this rate) and the accident rate is about 2.2 per million vehicles (as compared to about 0.4 per million for Main Street).

Although Church Street provides narrow travel lanes due to on-street parking on both sides, existing average and peak flows do not cause undo congestion, even combined with normal downtown traffic activities such as stopping for parking, traffic signals, crosswalks, or turns. This fact, together with traffic data previously collected by the CMRPC, indicates that the capacity of Church Street to carry existing traffic volumes is adequate. If Church Street traffic were to intensify due to increased economic activity in the area, portions of on-street parking could be eliminated to increase the capacity of the street. This could be



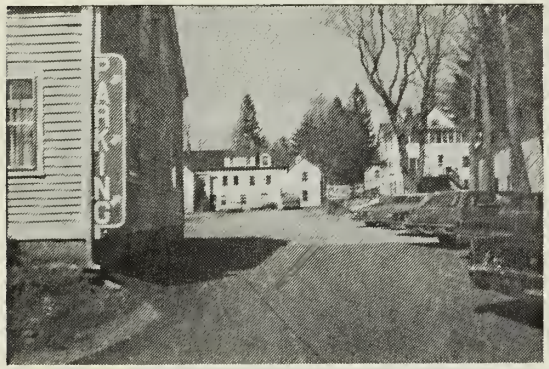
Parking signage on Church Street.

accomplished without significantly diminishing the Town's ability to provide customers and employees of establishments in the Whitinsville commercial area with ample and convenient parking facilities.

To increase safety in the area, as well as to encourage motorists to notice the various products and services offered on Church Street, a maximum 25 mph speed limit should be implemented and strictly enforced. The first and most important step in establishing such a limit is to provide clearly visible signage (perhaps blinking lights) to notify motorists that they are entering the Whitinsville commercial area, a reduced speed zone.

Measures which can help make Church Street safer and more functional for pedestrians include repainting the currently faded or, in some cases, non-existent crosswalks (providing 8-10 foot wide crossing areas) repairing demand-responsive crossing lights; constructing "neck-downs" (widened sidewalks) at especially busy pedestrian crossings; providing curb cuts and ramps at each corner to facilitate sidewalk access; and providing signage displaying information concerning the location of crosswalks as well as other pedestrian amenities such as refuse containers, telephone booths and restrooms.

Particular attention should be paid to locations where parents with children, children alone, handicapped, mobility-limited, or elderly persons must cross vehicular traffic. Critical intersections and crossings within the Whitinsville commercial area include the intersection of Hill, Linwood, and Church Streets--where elderly residents of the Cotton Mill housing, churchgoers, library users and others must cross a complex pattern of traffic and turning movements. The Church Street and Prospect Street intersection should also be given special attention, due to the



Off-street parking in downtown Whitinsville.

nearby location of especially active commercial facilities, and due to the more intensive commercial activity which begins here and extends to Hill Street.

Parking

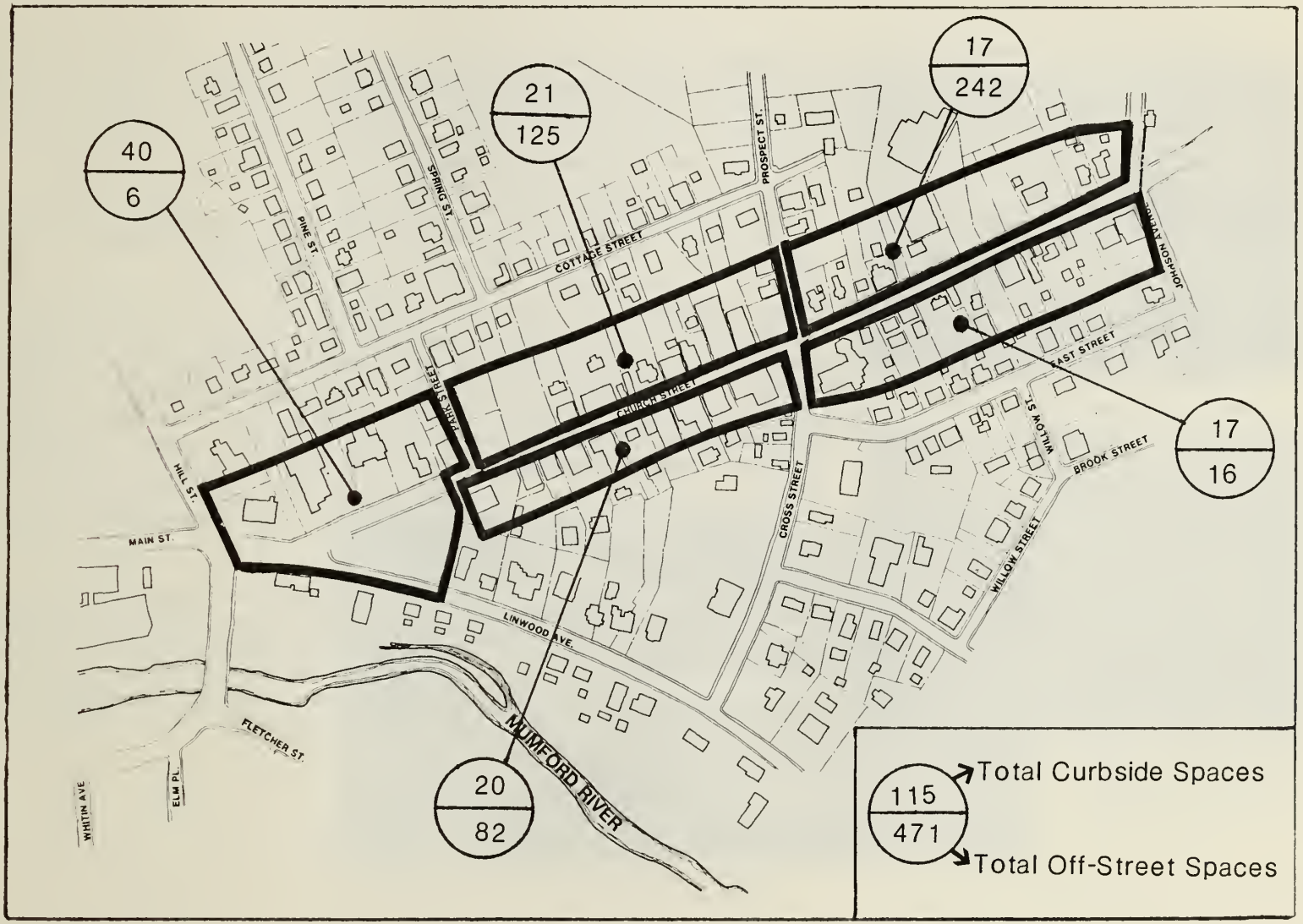
The Whitinsville commercial area provides approximately 115 curbside spaces, and 471 public off-street spaces within convenient walking distances to downtown commercial establishments (See map). The same area contains approximately 122,000 sq. ft. of gross leasable area (see Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Shopping and Business in Whitinsville. April 1981.), a significant portion of which is currently vacant. Given the common standard for parking--three or four parking spaces required for every 1,000 feet of leasable area--downtown Whitinsville would require approximately 360-490 parking spaces to service its needs assuming no vacancies whatsoever. Since the current capacity of the downtown is approximately 586 spaces, there is an excess parking capacity.

PARKING SPACE IN WHITINSVILLE COMMERCIAL AREA

115 Church Street curbside (62 north side, 53 south side)
471 public off-street (373 north side of Church Street,
98 south side of Church Street)
586 total spaces

During field observations of curbside parking turnover on Church Street (mid-day, weekday), approximately 10 cars vacated spaces and 10 cars arrived in parking spaces during 5-minute sample periods. This is a good

Existing Parking in Block Sectors



Adequate parking facilities currently exist in proportion to the amount of commercial activity in downtown Whitinsville.

turnover rate for this sort of commercial curbside parking. A count of curbside parking occupancy showed 32 cars parked on Church Street between Hill Street and Johnston Avenue (20 north side, 12 south side), representing a 28% occupancy rate. The occupancy rate of the downtown core between Park and Prospect Streets was higher, approximately 62%.

Given these observations, it is reasonable to conclude that any parking problems in Whitinsville relate to the location, prominence and accessibility of public on-street and off-street parking.

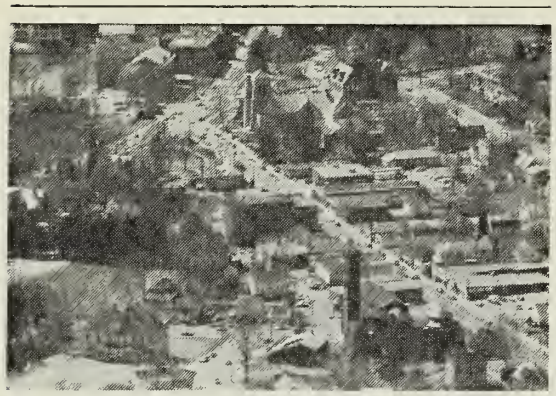
Minor imbalances in the location of available parking as compared to shopping destinations may contribute to an impression of insufficient parking in the commercial area. Since approximately 230 of the total 471 public off-street spaces exist in the vacant A&P parking lot, most of these spaces are currently unused. Similarly, while most other off-street spaces exist on the north side of Church Street, several of the busiest commercial establishments are located on the south side of Church Street. However, these are only minor locational imbalances, and such imbalances should not cause significant inconvenience for shoppers if parking areas are properly marked.

Proper parking signage is critical to efficient management and usage of available parking space in the commercial area. Although some large signs on Church Street do direct motorists toward off-street parking, signage should be uniform, distinctive and much more extensive. Signs should not only direct shoppers as to where off-street parking exists, but in some cases signs should provide information as to the best route in and out parking areas.

All merchants, businesspeople, employees and residents should be encouraged to move their cars from Church Street curbside spaces to off-street parking areas. One curbside space occupied all day by a merchant may pre-empt usage of that space by 8-12 shoppers. It is certainly reasonable for businesspeople to want to park close to their establishments for convenience and to create the appearance of a lively, active street. However, the displacement of parking for shoppers is an unacceptable result of merchant curbside parking.

Other actions which can be useful in managing downtown parking in Whitinsville include providing merchants with simple parking area maps which can be distributed to shoppers; repainting line striping; replacement of missing or broken parking meters; designation of handicapped parking; and re-evaluation of parking meter and parking ticket rates to ensure that the result of these rates (i.e. the proper levels of parking turnover) are consistent with the revitalization goals of the Whitinsville downtown community.

Extensive parking space exists in the A&P lot, on the eastern side of downtown Whitinsville.



Church Street, shown here under existing and proposed conditions, can be greatly improved by adding relatively inexpensive amenities such as new paving, street trees, awnings and benches.

IV Urban Design Recommendations

The character of an older commercial district such as downtown Whitinsville can provide an attractive alternative to larger shopping centers. However, unless the visual and spatial design elements of the Whitinsville commercial area can be substantially improved and made to project the flavor and charm of a people-oriented town center, many passers-through will be continue to utilize convenient shopping facilities elsewhere. The purpose of the urban design recommendations outlined in this section is to create an inviting place for pedestrians and shopping in downtown Whitinsville.

In order to accomplish this, it will be useful to draw from Whitinsville's heritage as a nineteenth century mill town whose development resulted--during the 1920s and 1930s--in an active commercial area on Church Street. While it is not the objective of these design recommendations to convert Whitinsville into a fascimile of Newburyport or Lowell, Massachusetts, a variety of sensible and relatively inexpensive improvements and renovations can help to improve the image of downtown Whitinsville.

These actions generally fall into two categories: Public Improvements and Facade Improvements.

Public Improvements

Landscaping is an extremely effective, yet relatively inexpensive, technique for improving the atmosphere of a downtown shopping district. Trees, potted shrubs and plants provide shade, color and movement to urban areas. Choose trees that are resistant to urban conditions and, if possible protect their bases with cast iron fences. Any addition of trees or shrubs to Church Street should be accompanied by an active program of landscape care in order for these improvements to remain healthy.

Illustrative Plan

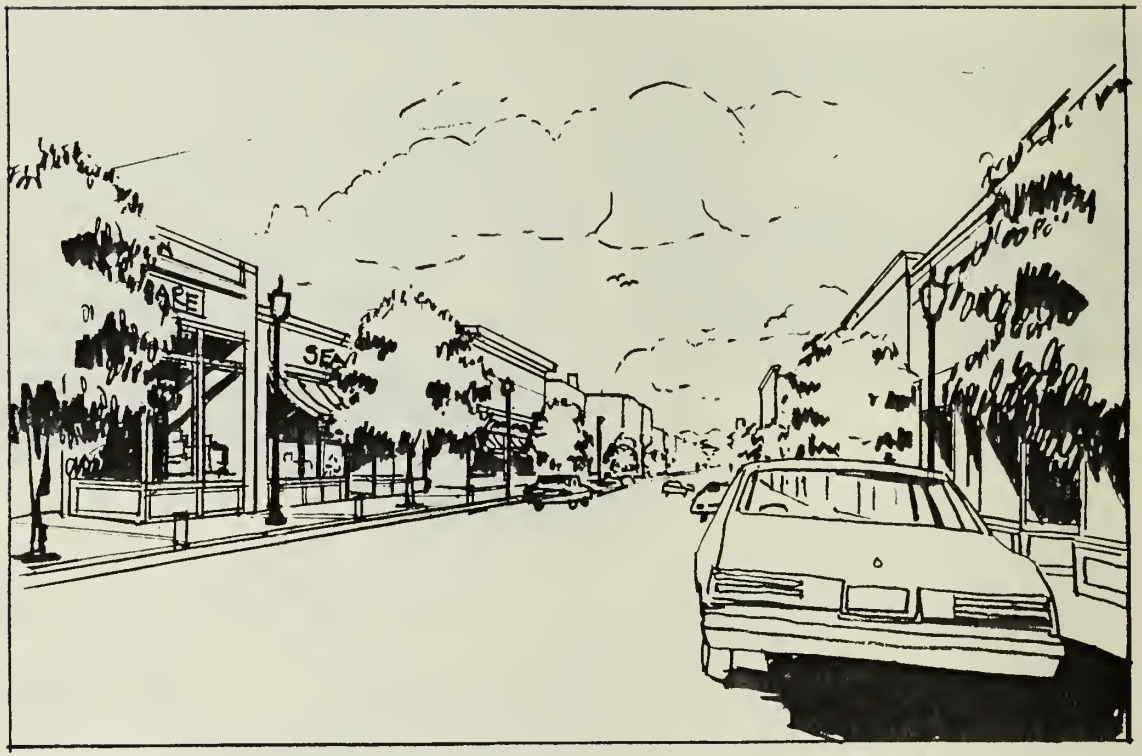
★ Illustrated Buildings

▶ Illustrated Views

⊕ Street Trees

Crosswalks

Street trees, period lighting and bollards are among the proposed design improvements shown here. (Church Street looking east at Park Street.)



As depicted here, the overall streetscape in downtown Whitinsville can be enlivened through the use of storefront improvements and pedestrian amenities.(Church Street looking west at Cross Street.)

Landscaping can also be used to create a sense of visual direction. Trees, lighting and paving can lead the eye and add coherence to an area. In Whitinsville these elements could be used to create a visual link between Church Street and the Mill complex.

The addition of pedestrian amenities on Church Street, such as benches, telephones and trash receptacles, is necessary in order to create a comfortable and convenient streetscape. These amenities should be located at major points of pedestrian activity in such a way as to provide pedestrians with pleasant places to congregate.

The widening of sidewalks (neckdowns) at street-crossing points provide increased safety for pedestrians, and can be combined with other amenities to establish focal points for the downtown streetscape. Although several curbside parking spaces may have to be eliminated to widen sidewalks at certain points on Church Street, adequate off-street parking exists to make such losses acceptable in comparison with benefits gained.

Low level, period incandescent lighting on Church Street is a pedestrian amenity which could help suggest the historic heritage of the area. The frequently used acorn-shaped lanterns mounted atop lighting poles reminiscent of the 1920s or 1930s might be appropriate to the area. New period lighting should be located in an orderly fashion so as to furnish Church Street with a sense of visual rhythm and to distinguish the commercial district from other sections of Whitinsville.

Overhead power and telephone lines on Church Street should, under ideal circumstances, be placed underground. However, since this type of action is prohibitively expensive, an alternative solution is recommended in which lines are consolidated and, where possible, relocated behind

buildings. Non-essential poles should be removed, and any other available techniques for lessening the visibility of poles and wires should be considered.

Facade Improvements

Facade improvements to businesses in the downtown should aim to restore period architectural details wherever possible. Improvements should enhance rather than fight the underlying design of the building to be improved. While, in some cases, major improvements are appropriate, in most cases simply cleaning, painting or routine maintenance of facades is all that is needed. Professional advice should be obtained before cleaning masonry facades. Steam or detergent methods are preferable to more abrasive sandblasting. In the case of wooden frame buildings, asphalt or other siding should be removed where possible and the orginal clapboard restored. Paints used for facades should be chosen from a limited pallette of subdued colors, and should complement other building materials present in the facade. Routine maintenance, such as fixing broken glass or replacing lights, also helps project on image of neat, attractive storefronts. The advertising value of attractive facades should not be underestimated, since storefronts serve to the catch the eye and to reflect the quality of the merchandise offered within.

Signs are equally important in projecting an attractive image for downtown businesses. Signs should contain simple messages, be easy to read, and contain a limited number of colors. They should always reflect and complement the design, size, building material and color of the stores to which they are attached. Uniform, concealed lighting from above or below is preferable to backlit signs, which are inappropriate to the character of an older commercial district.

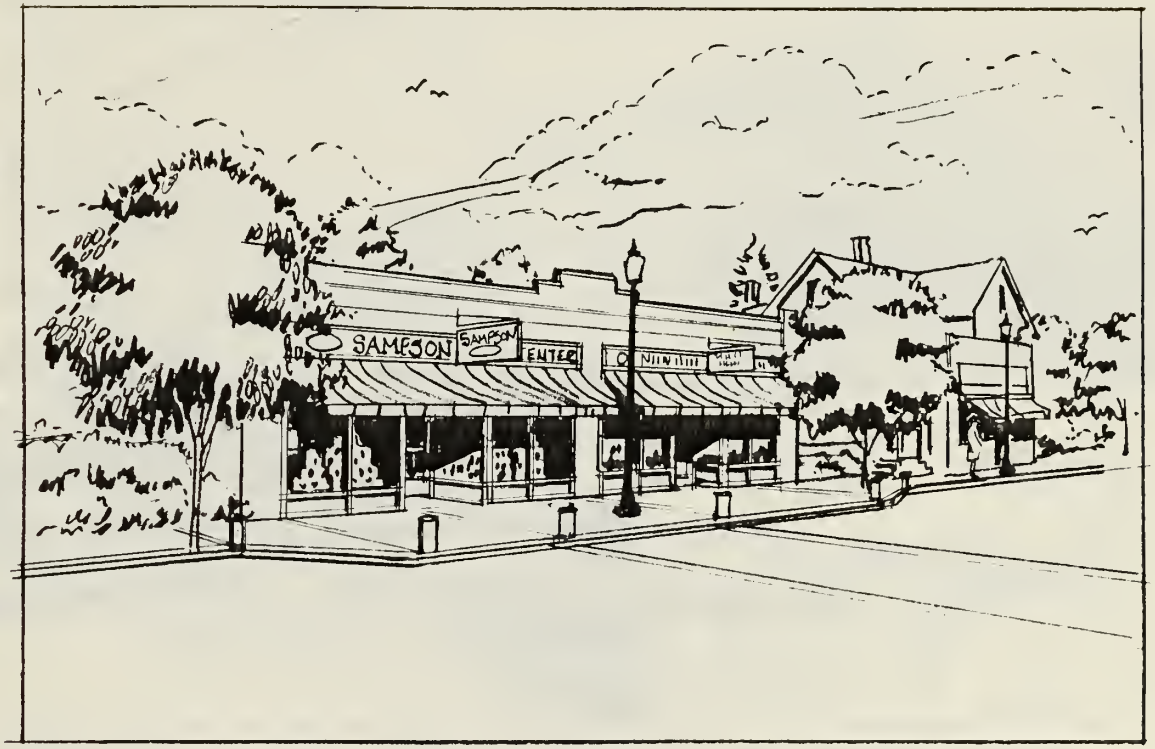
The Pythian Building, shown here, is a three story brick and limestone neo-classical structure built in 1921. Simple signage improvements, the addition of awnings, and landscaping are among the proposed improvements depicted for this building.

Store windows should be kept simple and attractive, displaying a limited number of items. Windows are best left uncluttered with temporary signs and other distracting paraphernalia. If products associated with specific stores do not lend themselves to attractive window display, other creative approaches such as seasonal displays can still be effective in catching shoppers' interest.

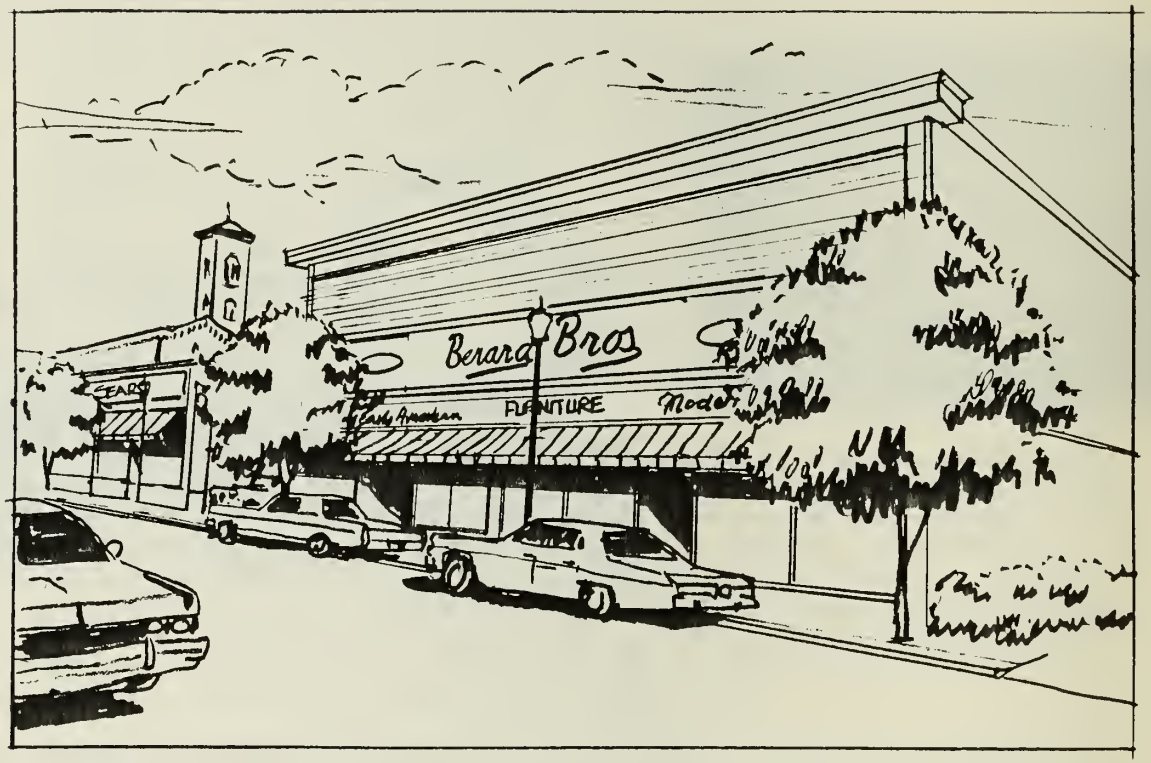
Awnings, a traditional building accessory enjoying a revival in popularity, can complement a storefront display and can also screen an unattractive storefront. Awnings are functional, decorative and inexpensive. They provide weather protection, add color and can be used to present simple messages to shoppers. Canvas awnings are preferable; aluminum awnings should always be avoided.

Urban design improvements such as those recommended here can help recreate the pedestrian-oriented flavor which represents the heritage of most older downtown commercial areas. Historic photographs of downtown Whitinsville, available in the Town Library, should be examined to get an idea of the kind of commercial district which existed on Church Street during the Town's development. Other innovative ideas, such as placing a restored railroad car in public view on the unused Whitinsville rail spur, can help make the downtown a lively and interesting place by drawing on Whitinsville's urban industrial heritage.

Downtown promotions, while not an urban design element, are a final component of any successful commercial revitalization effort. Church Street merchants should act together in creating and promoting at least three seasonal special shopping weeks in Whitinsville: winter/Christmas, spring/Easter, autumn/back to school. Street banners, newspaper supplements and sidewalk displays should accompany the promotions.



Facade improvements can be combined with streetscape amenities such as a widened sidewalk in order to emphasize the architectural elements and scale of this commercial building.



Signage improvements and the use of clapboard siding reduce the billboard effect of the Berard Brothers Building by lending scale to the facade.

Reopening boarded up windows, replacing or restoring existing siding, adding new cornices and side boards, signage and awnings all help to project an attractive image.

In general, merchants should agree upon standard hours for stores to be open, including identification of one night--preferably Thursday night--to remain open. Other efforts should be made to attract shoppers to Whitinsville which might include creation of a weekly farmer's market in summer in the A&P parking lot.

V

Sources of Funding and Technical Assistance

The series of tables on the following pages summarize the potential sources of funding and technical assistance for implementing revitalization activities in downtown Whitinsville. The tables list Federal, Massachusetts and certain other public and private agencies and programs.

Programs such as these have always changed from year to year, but recent changes in Federal programs, proposed state budget cuts, Proposition 2½ and other factors have combined to create an especially fluid situation in which the future of all such programs is uncertain. However, a wide variety of programs do currently offer assistance in areas including industrial and commercial improvements, hydroelectric development, street improvements and other revitalization activities. Town officials should also investigate the potential use of private charitable funds from foundations, businesses or corporations. It should be remembered that, for innovative, resourceful Town officials, no listing of potential funding sources should be considered complete.

Source	Program	Legislation	Purpose	Assistance	Eligibility	Potential Use in Whitinsville	Comments
U.S. Community Services Administration (202-254-5840)	Community Economic Development	Community Services Act of 1974, Title 7	To promote special assistance directed toward arresting community deterioration.	Project grants	Community development corporations with broad base community support controlled by local residents, including business and financial representatives.	Vaious types of revitalization investment activities.	$48 million allocation in 1981 is expected to be significantly reduced in fiscal 1982.
U.S. Economic Development Administration (202-377-2000)	Technical Assistance; Public Works Grants; Business Loan and Guarantee Program	Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965.	To assist in eliminating impediments to to economic progress.	Feasibility studies, technical assistance, grants loans and loan guarantees.	Technical assistance is available to any community experiencing impediments to economic progress. Public works grants aimed at local communities for various uses. Business loans and guarantees for large industrial concerns.	New gas main. Hydroelectric development. Industrial development.	Proposed federal budget cuts may completely dismantle the EDA in fiscal 1982. No applications are currently being accepted.
U.S. Department of Energy - Division of Hydroelectric Resource Development (202-633-8828)	Small Scale Hydroelectric Feasibility Study Loan Program	Public Utilities Policies Act of 1978	To promote or assist the development of hydroelectric energy sources.	Low interest loans for feasibility studies (7 3/8%, 10 yr. term, up to 90% study cost, up to $50,000). Loans are not repaid if hydroelectric project is determined infeasible.	For public or private projects between 100 Kw and 30 Mgw.	Hydroelectric development	A publication will soon be available from DOE which lists alternate methods of funding hydroelectric development.
U.S. Federal Highway Administration through Mass. Department of Public Works	Urban Systems	Various Federal Highway Acts compiled in Title 23 USC, "Materials Related to the Federal Highway Administration".	Modernize traffic signals, highways, bikeways, pedestrian walkways, bus loading facilities, grade separation for pedestrians.	Project grants	Urban areas with routes serving major activity centers including high traffic volume arterials and collector routes.	Traffic [illegible] streetscap[illegible] improvements.	Fiscal 1982 funding approximately $34 million statewide. Although program is funded through fiscal 1982, it may be phased out over the next three years.

Federal Programs (cont.)

Source	Program	Legislation	Purpose	Assistance	Eligibility	Potential Use in Whitinsville	Comments
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (202-755-7673)	Free Enterprise Zones (proposed)	Being prepared by U.S. Representatives Garcia and Kemp	To encourage businesses to enter zones experiencing economic distress.	Relief of corporate income tax and capital gains tax. Decrease of limits concerning depreciation.	A variety of distress criteria have been proposed, similar to those of the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program. (See below)	Industrial and commercial development.	Modeled after demonstration program underway in England, Wales and Scotland. Congressional hearing expected on the proposal within the next year.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (202-755-6587)	Community Development Block Grants - Small Cities Program	Title I, Housing & Community Development Act of 1974	General guidelines include adequate housing, suitable living environment, economic opportunity for lower income groups.	Grant	Towns compete for funding. Selection based on distress criteria and potential impact of proposed program.	Various types of revitalization activities.	CDBG fiscal 1982 budget proposal represents a 5% cutback from 1981.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (202-755-6234)	Urban Development Action Grants	1977 Housing and Community Development Act	To provide assistance to severely distressed cities to alleviate physical and economic deterioration. Aimed at attracting private investment.	Grants - no minimum or maximum	Must meet appropriate HUD distress criteria	Industrial or commercial development.	Proposed fiscal 1982 budget merges UDAG with CDBG. No budget figures yet available.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (202-755-5595)	Neighborhood Self Help Program	H.R. 11922 S: 2617	To provide assistance to neighborhood & voluntary organizations for specific housing & revitalization efforts	Project grants	Projects will have to involve residents, the private sector & local & state government	Small-scale streetscape improvements and other small-scale revitalization activities.	Proposed fiscal 1982 budget dismantles this program. At best, program will be significantly reduced.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (202-755-6270)	Rehabilitation Loans	Section 312 Housing Act of 1964	To finance rehabilitation of structures in local code enforcement areas.	Direct federal loans	Property owners and business tenants in local code enforcement areas.	Facade improvements	Proposed fiscal 1982 budget dismantles this program. However Congressional opposition to program termination may force compromise.

Source	Program	Legislation	Purpose	Assistance	Eligibility	Potential Use in Whitinsville	Comments
U.S. Department of the Interior - Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (202-343-4256)	Historic American Engineering Record	Various authorizations, including the Archaeology and Historic Preservation Act of 1974.	To preserve engineering and industrial structures and sites which represent the technological heritage of the U.S.	Technical assistance. Financial assistance on selected projects	Criteria include engineering innovations important to the industrial development of an area; typical of an early engineering	Rehabilitation of industrial buildings. Hydroelectric development.	Although program is currently active, significant cuts or possible elimination of program are expected for fiscal 1982.
U.S. Department of the Interior - Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (202-343-4941)	Historic Preservation Grants-In-Aid	Historic Preservation Act of 1966	Funds the preservation of properties which are significant for historic or cultural reasons.	Matching grants	Property must be listed on National Register of Historic Preservation.	Rehabilitation of mill buildings.	Although program is currently active, significant cuts or possible elimination of program are expected for fiscal 1982.
U.S. Small Business Administration	7A Loan Program	Small Business Investment Act of 1954. Section 7A	To provide financing for small businesses which might otherwise be unable to obtain loans.	Direct loans and loan guarantees	Eligible businesses are independently owned and operated, not dominant in their field, and meet various other SBA criteria.	Facade and business improvements.	Proposed fiscal 1982 allocation; 179 million in direct loans, 3 billion in loan guarantees.
U.S. Small Business Administration	502 Loan Program	Small Business Investment Act of 1954. Section 502	To provide financing for small businesses which might otherwise be unable to obtain loans.	Direct loans and loan guarantees for the acquisition of fixed assets	Loans provided through local development corporation composed 75% of people living or doing business in area.	Facade and business improvements.	Proposed fiscal 1982 allocations: $6 million in direct loans, $163 million in loan guarantees.
U.S. Small Business Administration	Neighborhood Business Revitalization	None required	To stimulate commercial and industrial small business revitalization in declining but viable urban neighborhoods, towns and rural communities.	Both SBA 7a and 502 loans and loan guarantees.	Currently, only 55-60 designated pilot cities are eligible, but program may expand.	Facade and business improvements. Industrial development.	Funding in the future depends on allocations for other SBA programs.

Source	Program	Legislation	Purpose	Assistance	Eligibility	Potential Use in Whitinsville	Comments
Mass. Executive Office of Communities and Development (617-727-7180)	Chapter 121A Tax Agreements	Ch. 121A M.G.L.	To assist in undertaking of residential, commercial, civic, recreational, historic, or industrial projects in specified eligible areas.	Authorizes the exemption of certain Massachusetts developments from real property tax. Sets forth procedures for negotiating alternative tax payment agreements.	Blighted, open, decadent or substandard conditions must exist within the proposed project area.	Industrial development.	Authorization of tax exemptions should be justified by beneficial impact which the project will have on the community. (used for Whitinsville Cotton Mill Apartments)
Mass. Executive Office of Communities and Development (617-727-4082)	Commercial Area Revitalization Districts	Ch. 40D M.G.L.	To provide commercial developers in state-approved distressed areas with financing normally provided only to industrial developers.	Tax exempt revenue bonds, mortgage insurance, tax credits through Massachusetts Urban Job Incentive Program.	Area must be central business district having experienced recent economic disinvestment. Overall land use (generally 70-75%) should be commercial.	Commercial development	CARD Program Coordinator should make site visit to review boundaries before CARD application is submitted.
Mass. Executive Office of Energy Resources (617-727-44732)	Small Power Production Program	Ch. 25A M.G.L.	To provide assistance relative to the use of hydropower, wind and photovoltaics.	Technical assistance from both an engineering and a business perspective. Grants available when resources permit. Assistance is both for feasibility and construction.	Businesses, individuals, and public entities eligible for technical assistance. Grants limited to municipalities.	Hydroelectric development	
Mass. Office of Manpower Development	Urban Job Incentive Program	Ch. 23B M.G.L.	To provide an inducement for firms to establish new businesses in urban areas in order to promote job creation.	Tax credit for new business facilities in poverty area. Credit is based on difference between local property tax rate and state average.	Firms must exist in area of substantial poverty, must employ 20% from local area, must provide a training program for job upgrading.	Industrial and business development	
Mass. Department of Public Works	Chapter 90	Ch. 90 M.G.L.	Construction, improvement & maintenance of of town, city, and county ways.	75% Project funding	Municipalities in need of improvements specifically authorized by DPW.	Traffic improvements.	Funds allocated by formula according to variables such as population, employment and miles of road.

Source	Program	Legislation	Purpose	Assistance	Eligibility	Potential Use in Whitinsville	Comments
Mass. Department of Public Works	Chapter 497	Ch. 497 M.G.L. Acts of 1971	To construct, maintain, & public ways	100% Project grants	Municipalities incurring costs specified in Section 31, Chpt. 81 of MGL	Traffic improvements.	Funds allocated by formula according to variables such as population, employment and miles of road.
Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation	Community Development Technical Assistance	Ch. 488 M.G.L. Acts of 1978	To provide technical assistance to neighborhood redevelopment organizations in their efforts to effect community revitalization and job creation.	Technical assistance which includes organizational development, economic development planning, financial planning or packaging, grant application, market research, business plan development and legal services.	Any non-profit organization engaged in activities contributing to the development and economic well being of a target area, and to the retention of primary employment and capital in a target area.	Development of revitalization strategies.	Funds derived from Federal and other sources.
Mass. Industrial Finance Agency (617-451-2477)	M.I.F.A. loans	Ch. 23A M.G.L.	To create jobs by stimulating investment in the productive assets of the state's industrial employers and in the revitalization of the state's central business districts.	Tax exempt industrial loans; Insured industrial mortgage loans; tax exempt pollution control loans; Commercial revitalization tax-exempt mortgage loans.	Financial feasibility of project and borrower's credit are evaluated in the same way as would be done for a conventional loan.	Industrial development. Hydroelectric development.	

State Programs (cont.)

Source	Program	Legislation	Purpose	Assistance	Eligibility	Potential Use in Whitinsville	Comments
Mass. Government Land Bank (617-727-8257)	Short-Term Land Acquisition	Ch. 762 M.G.L. Acts of 1979	To implement development projects sensitive to local needs, increase jobs, expand local tax base, revitalize older downtown areas, leverage private investment.	Provides financ- for redevelopment activities such as property and land acquisition, demolition and site improvements. Funding up to $3 million. Variable mortgage rates and terms.	Property must be designated as "decadent, substandard or blighted" by the Land Bank. Other criteria involves public involvement and benefit. Public and private groups are eligible.	Industrial and commercial development.	The Land Bank must own the property while improvements financed by the agency are underway.
Mass. Technology Development Council (617-723-4920)	High Tech Development	Ch. 497 M.G.L. Acts of 1968	To attract or promote the development of high technology industry in Mass.	Provides venture capital, technical assistance, advice on incorporation and financial planning	Includes various financial and business criteria, including reasonable rents, inexpensive energy sources, transportation access.	Industrial development	
Mass. Community Development Finance Corporation (617-742-0366)	Economic Revitalization	Ch. 40F M.G.L.	To stabilize and expand employment opportunities, strengthen local and state economies, and increase resident involvement in areas in need of economic revitalization.	Venture capital for new and existing businesses.	Enterprises which involve three-way partnership of CDFC, business entrepreneurs, and a local community development corporation.	Industrial and commercial development.	Investment opportunities are selected on the basis of business plans and community impact evaluations submitted by applicants.
Local Banks	Leeway Funds	Ch. 170 Section 26-111 M.G.L. Ch. 168-551A M.G.L.	To make loans otherwise not allowable according to normal banking procedures.	Direct loan	Individuals, groups and businesses are eligible. Specific criteria depends on individual banks.	Various [illegible] of revitalization investment activities.	Not more than 1% of bank assets are authorized for these loans.
Mass. Business Development Corporation. (617-723-7515)	Industrial Development Loans	Ch. 671 M.G.L.	To provide for jobs and enhance the economy of the state.	Direct loans at 3% over prime rate to higher risk ventures than would normally receive financing from a bank.	General merit of venture, including local economy and employment. Most loans for manufacturing activities.	Industrial development.	

Funding Sources: Literature for Further Research

In order to begin a more detailed research effort regarding potential funding sources to implement revitalization projects, the following literature is recommended. Familiarity with these sources will also enable Town officials to more easily monitor the frequent changes which many funding programs undergo from year to year.

Resource	Produced By:	Description:	Available At:
Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance	U.S. Government Printing Office	A huge but surprisingly easy to use catalogue of federal aid programs.	Regional Planning Agency
Federal Grants Reporter	Federal Grants Information Center	A catalogue, indexed by federal department, of federal agencies and programs.	Regional Planning Agency
Federal Regional Council Hot Line	Federal Regional Council	A clearinghouse of information on federal agencies and programs.	(617) 223-6646
Federal Assistance Programs Retrieval System (FAPRS)	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	Computerized search system matching project with federal funding program.	University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Service
The Foundation Directory Edition "S"	The Foundation Center - 1975 Columbia University Press	A directory of philanthropic foundations in the U.S.	Regional Planning Agency
Sources of Capital for Community Economic Development	Center for Community Economic Development	A handbook on how to obtain financing for community economic development.	Center for Community Economic Development, 639 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02139
Winning Grants for Community Economic Development	Center for Community Economic Development	A bibliography of pertinent materials.	Center for Community Economic Development, 639 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02139
Getting Started	Center for Community Economic Development	Resources for community-based economic development.	Center for Community Economic Development, 639 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02139
New England Neighborhood Revitalization Center		Non-profit organization providing technical assistance, case studies, and information contacts.	Box 70, Warren, R.I., 02885 (401) 245-6622
Downtown Idea Exchange	Downtown Research and Development Center	Informative newsletter providing research results, case studies and other relevant data.	270 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10016, (212) 889-5666
Conserve Neighborhoods	National Trust for Historic Preservation	A newsletter for citizen organizations.	1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036